

Ecological Conversion

In hope of "new heaven and new earth"

Eduardo Agosta Scarel, O. Carm.

*37 faith proposals to
think why today we live
a crucial time*



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Abstract

"Ecological conversion" is an attempt to offer Catholic Christians and believers some considerations of faith to encourage us to take an active care of the environment, the earth, our common home. Undertaking an active care of the environment is only the beginning of a profound and urgent process of "ecological conversion", which begins at the Easter of Christ, is prolonged in time by the power of the Spirit, and will culminate when "a new heaven and a new earth" will arrive (AP 21: 1). Without pretending to be exhaustive, these brief reflections are giving shape in ecological key to the puzzle that the ecological issue sometimes means to the ordinary believer. Today we understand this as an absence of socio-environmental justice to which the Human Family is called to build by vocation. The reflections start from the contribution of science, some key texts of the Bible, and the "ecological" theology present in the teachings of the recent popes of the Church, from Paul VI to Francis.

About the author

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ECOLOGICAL CONVERSION

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Environment: possibility and limit

The environment is, in relation to the manifestation of life, sustenance, possibility and limit.

1. From an ecological point of view, **the environment** is the physical, concrete space of nature at a given moment; in which the exchange of energy in all its forms occurs. The flow of energy in the earth system is a complete gift of the sun. Everyday life is streaming from the sun and is received by the environment. You cannot add anything human to unfold spontaneously, that is, naturally, the magnificent donation of possibilities that it brings, like the miracle of life in its multiple forms, in mutual interrelation with the environment. Thus, **the environment is, in relation to the manifestation of life, sustenance, possibility and limit.** Without the environment there is no life, real and concrete, in any way. In this sense, it is unique and collective: each natural space brings its own possibilities, or not, of life: as you can see, for example, in a valley of the Andes, in a meadow in Illinois, in the interior of the Mediterranean Sea, in the dense forests of the Amazon, or in the Atacama desert or the Moon itself.



“AND GOD SAW THAT IT WAS GOOD” (GEN 1:10).

2. Keep in mind that scientific knowledge about the physics of **creation** is based on the exchange of energy flows, matter and forces to change the forms and move the states of things. It is the way to understand how things come to exist, but not why and for what purpose creation arose. For the believer, the environment is created; it is the creation of God. The Bible begins with the book of Genesis, which contains two accounts of creation. The first story is contained in chapter 1, the second in chapters 2 and 3. These texts have mainly religious purposes¹. In other words: they are not concerned about giving information of a scientific or natural nature,

¹ Onwards, Cf. Dogmatic Constitution Dei Verbum, II Vatican Council.

but about the origin of the world. Their interest is to contribute to **a vision of the world as something originated by a holy, faithful and loving God, and as something destined to an alliance that is the salvation of everything created².**

The creation story

3. These sacred texts in Genesis present the understanding that the powerful Word of God the Creator has realized the work of creation. By His Word, everything has been created out of nothing. Everything created is good in the eyes of God (Gen. 1, "And God saw that it was good", it is repeated throughout each day). Sun, moon, stars, oceans, air, soil, birds, trees, fish, animals, plants and human beings; all. The Genesis narrations emphasize that only God is really the divine being and that everything else in the world is a creature, and therefore, created by God. **Being the work of God is the reason why creation is sacred.**

4. Among all creatures created by God, **human beings occupy a special place.** Created man and woman, human beings are the image and likeness of God, therefore, they share a common dignity and become pro-creators, that is, responsible for the preservation of God's work in time; We were granted dominion over the rest of creation because of being an epiphany of God (Gen 1: 26-28).

² Cf. Ruiz de la Peña, Juan Luis (1988). Teología de la Creación, Ed. Sal Terrae, Santander, p. 31.

Dominion (not dominance) means that we have authority and responsibility over the welfare and well-being of God's creation. We resemble God mainly because of this dominion; therefore, our dominion must also resemble the dominion of God, which is the welfare and love for each creature³.



“AND GOD MADE HUMAN BEING IN HIS IMAGE, IN THE IMAGE OF GOD HE MADE THEM: MALE AND FEMALE HE MADE THEM.” (GEN 1:27).

³ Cf. Agosta Scarel, Eduardo and Lucio Florio (2013). La Tierra Creada. In: Una Tierra habitable para Todos, Ed. Claretiana, Buenos Aires, p. 20.

The rupture

The earth is presented in the book of Genesis with the metaphor of "the garden".

5. In Genesis, the environment of **the earth is presented with the metaphor of "the garden"**, in which "God places the human being" to "cultivate it and care for it" (Gen 2:15). Therefore the relationship of human beings to nature and the environment is that of custodians or stewards. We are custodians, ministers, guardians who have been entrusted by the Creator to care for our environment. The custodianship implies the conscious and responsible management of something that is entrusted to the care of each. **We received instructions to "care for and cultivate" God's creation (Gen 2:15).** It is an ecological instruction.



"AND GOD GAVE THEM HIS BLESSING AND SAID TO THEM, BE FERTILE AND HAVE INCREASE, AND MAKE THE EARTH FULL AND BE MASTERS OF IT" (GEN 1:28).

6. However, for some reason, in some way linked to the distortion in the perception of reality and in the exercise of freedom made by human beings (Gen 3), evil is introduced in the course of time. **Humanity suffered sin as broken bonds on three levels.** A level related to God, since the man and the woman hid when God passed, having feelings of shame and fear because of the gaze of God. This explains the historical propensity for humans to avoid God's presence, either by forgetting his commandments, or by ignoring or forgetting the presence of God.

7. A second level of broken bond is found among humans, since before the scene of sin, Adam had said in reference to Eve, "this is, at last, bones of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (Gen 2: 20); However, after sin, Adam complains about his partner for the sin committed by saying: "The woman you gave me to be with me" (Gen 3:10). This is the scene of the first guilt against our neighbour, the partner, for our inability to recognize our own guilt. Then, a third level of broken bond is with nature, highlighted by the curse on the snake, childbirth with pain, the bread gained with effort and hard work etc., thus evidencing the hostility between the human flowering and the power of the nature.

8. Underlying the texts of Genesis is the interpretation of the faith that **disturbances within the natural world have been introduced**

by the mankind. That is to say, the distancing of the human being from the will of God has a cosmic impact that alters the order of creation, generating an ecological crisis. Obviously, there is no pretence to give a historical explanation of natural disasters and human anguish⁴. What you can see is **a certain deep relationship between human beings and the rest of the natural world**, a relationship that includes an extension of the mystery of evil in nature, that originates in the human heart and that impacts on balance and harmony of nature⁵.



“BUT OF THE FRUIT OF THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL YOU MAY NOT TAKE; FOR ON THE DAY WHEN YOU TAKE OF IT, DEATH WILL CERTAINLY COME TO YOU” (GEN 2, 17).

⁴ *ibíd.*, p. 21.

⁵ Cf. José Loza (2006). Génesis 1-11. Comentario a la Nueva Biblia de Jerusalén. Ed. Desclée de Brouwer, Bilbao.

Call to conversion

9. From the beginning, the call of God clashes with the infidelity of human beings. Human beings, having doubted the goodness of God's work and his love, flee from his presence instead of looking for it. To give right direction to them, God makes them realize that they are no longer in their place, extending to them this call: **Where are you? (Gen 3:9).** This call is implicitly an invitation to return, an invitation to a change of interior attitude, **an invitation to conversion.** Conversion is a return on one's steps to retrace the path made, but this time, in the right direction, towards God. In short, from the Old Testament, **the history of the vocation of human beings, of their place in the world, is at the same time the history of their conversion.** The conversion of human beings is essentially a restoration of the relationships between humanity: with others and with oneself, with the environment, and with God. Necessarily it is restoration of the cosmic order of the world and the ecological balance of nature, thought by God.



“WHERE ARE YOU?” (GEN 3:9).

At the end of times

Because everything is connected, the non-conversion of human beings impacts the harmony of nature. Today more than ever.

10. Having said that, it was not until the middle of the twentieth century that we witnessed the magnitude of the human being's impact on creation⁶. At the end of the second millennium we fell into account of the rupture. In 1970, in line with the first voices raised from civil society Paul VI declared that the dizzying industrial civilization endangers the balance of the earth, causing an irreversible deterioration that leads to a possible ecological

⁶ Witnesses of the paradox: The light of intelligence endowed humanity with unique and unimagined progress throughout the history of civilization (for example, electricity, quantum technology, exploration of the universe ...). The growing distance from reason to the heart led humanity to some of its darkest chapters, that do not make us proud of (for example, the Second World War, the irreversible destruction of nature, famines ...).

catastrophe and the annihilation of life on earth, since "**everything is bound together**" in this common home⁷. His statement is brilliant because it summarizes any updated treatise on the planetary imbalance that environmental sciences can offer. The concept of interconnection derives from the theory of systems applied to earth sciences, in which each component of the terrestrial system, such as the biosphere (life), the lithosphere (land), the atmosphere (air), the hydrosphere (oceans, rivers and lakes), each part, plays its role in maintaining balance, and interact with each other at different scales of space and time to maintain harmony and restore any imbalance that may arise.

11. Nonetheless, for Paul VI **interconnection** is an instance that **demands a greater ethical response, a human moral progress** that accounts for the consequences of its actions on the ecological interweaving. For this reason, the Pope declares that "the most extraordinary scientific advances, the most surprising technical capacities, the most surprising economic growth, unless they are accompanied by authentic moral and social progress, will definitively turn against man". As a Church we have to "better underline the urgency and **the need for a radical change in the behavior of humanity**, if we want to ensure its survival"⁸, that is, if we want to take care of our common home, the garden.

⁷ Cf. Address of Pope Paul VI to FAO on the 25th anniversary of its institution (November 16, 1970), 4: AAS 62 (1970), 833.

⁸ Cf. Ibid.

12. In the last decades there has been an **ecological rebirth within the Church**. It was part of the renaissance brought about by the Second Vatican Council. The progressive awareness of articulating social justice and caring for the environment has been growing in the People of God, especially in those regions of the earth, such as Latin America, and in particular, the Amazon, where the coexistence of a primary social poverty and an immeasurable abundance of nature distorts the preaching of the Gospel message, due to the contradictions that geography offers every day.



“THE LORD BY WISDOM PUT IN POSITION THE BASES OF THE EARTH; BY REASON HE PUT THE HEAVENS IN THEIR PLACE. BY HIS KNOWLEDGE THE DEEP WAS PARTED, AND DEW CAME DROPPING FROM THE SKIES” (PRO 3:19-20).

Ecological conversion

13. Pope Saint John Paul II, concerned about the responsible interdependence between human beings and nature, sought **to stimulate and sustain a global ecological conversion**, to make "humanity more sensitive about the catastrophe" towards which it is heading⁹. Thus, the concept of ecological conversion appeared for the first time in the teaching of the Church. **Ecological conversion means a change in our lifestyles**, as well as in **our patterns of production and consumption** and in **the established power structure**. Human beings seem unable to perceive "other meanings of their natural environment, but only those that serve the purpose of immediate use and consumption"¹⁰. Ecological conversion requires a human ecology that "takes into account the nature of each being and their mutual connection in an orderly (bigger) system"¹¹ that sustains it.

⁹ Cf. John Paul II, Cf. Catechesis (17 January 2001), 4: L'Osservatore Romano, weekly issues in Spanish (19 January 2001), p. 12.

¹⁰ Cf. John Paul II Enc. Letter Centesimus annus (1 May 1991), 58.

¹¹ Cf. John Paul II, Enc. Letter. Sollicitudo rei socialis (30 December 1987), 34.

A shift in mentality and logic

Ecological conversion requires a shift in mentality.

14. In the same line, Benedict XVI affirms that "the deterioration of nature is in fact closely connected to the culture that shapes human coexistence: **when "human ecology" is respected within society, environmental ecology also benefits**"¹². In other words: "The duties we have with the environment are related to those we have for the person considered in himself and in his relationship with others," because **"The way humanity treats the environment influences the way it treats itself, and vice versa"**. All this as a natural consequence of the fact that everything is bound together, connected (Paul VI). This well-understood ecology of mankind "invites contemporary society to a serious review of its life-style, which, in many parts of the world, is prone to hedonism and consumerism, regardless of their harmful consequences"¹³. Therefore, it can be said that **ecological conversion** begins with **"an effective shift in mentality which can lead to the adoption of new life-styles** in which the quest for truth, beauty, goodness and communion with others for the sake of common growth are the factors which determine consumer choices, savings and investments".¹⁴

¹² Cf. Benedict XVI, Enc. Letter [*Caritas in veritate*](#) (29 June 2009), 52, also 18, 34, 36, 47.

¹³ Cf. *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, 51.

15. Likewise, Benedict XVI identifies the material cause of the current crisis: an economy that has assumed the cultural eclipse of God, with the consequent loss of the “centrality of the human person”, and the principle of gratuitousness and the logic of the gift, values inherent to the creation of God, which make human beings brothers and sisters, one family sharing a common home, this inherited land¹⁵. **The economy requires a change of logic** to function correctly, assuming **a people-centered ethics**¹⁶. For Benedict: “Economic activity cannot solve all social problems through the simple application of commercial logic. This needs to be directed towards the pursuit of the common good”. Since we understand “earth, water and air as gifts of creation that belong to everyone”¹⁷, we have the challenge of showing that **“in commercial relationships the principle of gratuitousness and the logic of gift as an expression of fraternity can and must find their place within normal economic activity”**. It is a change from the prevailing commercial logic of pure profit, as the sole purpose of economic activity, a need to “shape and structure be given to those types of economic initiative which, without rejecting profit, aim at a higher goal than the mere logic of the exchange of equivalents, of profit as an end in itself”¹⁸.

¹⁵ Cf. Ibid., 34.

¹⁶ Cf. Ibid., 36, 45.

¹⁷ Cf. Ibid., 51.

¹⁸ Cf. Ibid., 18.



THE WAY HUMANITY TREATS THE ENVIRONMENT INFLUENCES THE WAY IT TREATS ITSELF, AND VICE VERSA (BENEDICT XVI).

Shift in the commercial logic.

16. As the current economy in the world is exercised, it is far from eradicating the social injustice that it generates and the deterioration to nature it causes, since it is still based on the irrational logic of infinite growth. The idea of a non-growth

economy can be a threat to an economist. But the idea of an economy in constant growth is a blackmail for those who look for alternative routes to take care of creation¹⁹.



“MAKE NO STORE OF WEALTH FOR YOURSELVES ON EARTH, WHERE IT MAY BE TURNED TO DUST BY WORMS AND WEATHER, AND WHERE THIEVES MAY COME IN BY FORCE AND TAKE IT AWAY” (MT 6:19).

¹⁹ Cf. Tim Jackson (2010). UK Sustainable Development Commission: Prosperity without Growth report, at <http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/publications.php?id=914.html>

Spirituality of ecology in Laudato Si'

That way of living according to the values and beliefs that govern the fundamental choices and decisions of life.

17. Ecological conversion finds a clear expression in Laudato Si'²⁰ (LS, onwards), based as it is on elements of biblical and spiritual traditions, and the contributions of contemporaneous human sciences. Conversion is about a "**desire to change**" (LS 218), which impels us to become aware of the real state of things and our relationship with creation (LS 63), so "**we must examine our lives and acknowledge the ways in which we have harmed God's creation through our actions and our failure to act.** We need to experience a conversion or change of heart" (LS 218). Because whatever does not touch the fibers of our hearts, does not generate real changes in behavior. We often see how mere information does not change us; what changes us is that which springs from within, touching our hearts ("if I do not have love, I am nothing", 1Cor 13,1). It is about "to daring to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it" (LS 19).

18. Ecological conversion means opening ourselves to a **new spirituality of ecology**²¹. We understand that the spirituality to which the encyclical directs is that way of living according to the

²⁰ Cf. Francis, Enc. Letter Laudato Si', (24 May 2015).

²¹ Cf. Francis, Enc. Letter Gaudete et Exsultate (19 March 2018), 28.

values and beliefs that govern the fundamental choices and decisions of life. Therefore, it is a new experience that forms a lifestyle alternative to the dominant culture, of pure consumption and discarding. Such spirituality can only be sustained by the essential values that faith offers; such as, for example, **the principle of gratuitousness and the logic of the gift, which expresses human fraternity and is an essential condition for opening ourselves to universal fraternity with all creatures.** For this reason, Francis affirms that "although this Encyclical welcomes dialogue with everyone so that together we can seek paths of liberation, I would like from the outset to show how **faith convictions can offer Christians, and some other believers as well, ample motivation to care for nature and for the most vulnerable of their brothers and sisters.**" (LS 64).



THE ENTIRE MATERIAL UNIVERSE SPEAKS OF GOD'S LOVE, HIS BOUNDLESS AFFECTION FOR US. SOIL, WATER, MOUNTAINS: EVERYTHING IS, AS IT WERE, A CARESS OF GOD (FRANCIS).

Great motivations

19. The convictions of faith that Francis develops in numbers 84 and 85 concern this ecological spirituality: **"The entire material universe speaks of God's love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God"**

(LS 84). We must convince ourselves that "to sense each creature singing the hymn of its existence is to live joyfully in God's love and hope" (LS 85). From this core of convictions, the Pope assumes the call to peace, to justice and to the preservation of all creation. The central message is the possibility of achieving a personal experience of love for God, which is realized through each creature and the poor.

20. The revolutionary element of Pope Francis's message in the encyclical is that **the essential motivation for the care of nature and the care of living beings is nothing other than love.** Other more materialistic ecological motivations without doubt are doomed to failure, because "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Mt. 6.21).

21. **Conversion, above all, means** a change in mentality, **a change in the logic of thinking,** given that " we need to realize that **certain mindsets really do influence our behavior**" (LS 215). "A strategy for real change calls for rethinking processes in their entirety, for it is not enough to include a few superficial ecological considerations while failing to question **the logic which underlies present-day culture**" (LS 197). Therefore, we must question our underlying "logics" that prevent us from taking the ecological issues seriously.

22. Mere information is not enough, we must "fall into account", "be aware of" the seriousness of the planetary problems of environmental deterioration, because that **"awareness of the gravity of today's cultural and ecological crisis must be translated into new habits"** (LS 209). This means that we cannot continue living as we are doing, we cannot continue to consume as we consume, or feed as we feed, or move as we move. We cannot continue degrading the environment or polluting as we are doing. In order to react in time, we have to dedicate time to look around us because "an outsider looking at our world would be amazed at such behavior, which at times appears self-destructive" (LS 55).

Spirituality of interconnectedness

Without a "mysticism" that encourages us, ecological conversion will only be a chimera.

23. The primary motivation throughout LS is the full conviction that love makes possible **"an alternative understanding of the quality of life"**, for which **"less is more"** (LS 222). For Pope Francis "the teachings of the Gospel have direct consequences for our way of thinking, feeling and living" (LS 216). Authentic ecological spirituality can motivate us to a more passionate concern for the care of the world because it provides an "interior impulse which encourages, motivates, nourishes and gives meaning to our individual and communal activity " (LS 216). It will not be possible to

commit ourselves to the great causes only with doctrines alone, without a "**mysticism**" that encourages us.

24. The force of love that the believer discovers living contact with creation - in the admirable beauty of nature and in the response to the most disadvantaged brothers - can be a source of joy and celebration because we are able to discover **the gratuitousness that precedes, sustains, feeds and returns (our feet) to the ground.**

25. We need to sow a spirituality of **connection with everything created**: "Christians have not always appropriated and developed the spiritual treasures bestowed by God upon the Church, where **the life of the spirit is not dissociated from the body or from nature or from worldly realities, but lived in and with them, in communion with all that surrounds us**" (LS 216). Ecological conversion also involves a change in our ways of celebrating and praying.



THE TEACHINGS OF THE GOSPEL HAVE DIRECT CONSEQUENCES FOR OUR WAY OF THINKING, FEELING AND LIVING (FRANCIS).

26. As examples, Pope Francis cites the experience of simplicity of Saint Therese of Lisieux, to emphasize **the need to change our way of life to one which is simpler, more communal and in solidarity with others, especially the poor** (LS 230). The Canticle of Creation of Saint John of the Cross, serves the Pope to illustrate the value of grateful and joyful contemplation of those who are able to intuit (gratefully contemplate) the nexus between the creature and the Creator (LS 234)²².

²² Cf. Fernando Millán Romeral (2017). Dalla casa del Carmelo alla casa comune. In: Tutte le creature sono connesse tra loro, Pontificio Istituto di Spiritualità del Tersianum, Edizioni OCD, Rome. Fiamma Viva 57, pp. 26, 32.

27. Nor is it about an isolated, voluntarist and individual entrepreneurship of a few. That is not enough. The ecological conversion is **a call to all to the cooperative participation, creating networks, to promote new habits and virtues** that help us to get out of the simplistic thinking that: "every problem has a technical solution". Educate to find technical solutions within the need for community action, motivated by beauty, good and truth, through new capacities to intervene in political processes at different levels to which each one has or can have access.

28. Ecological conversion is based on the experience of an **ecological spirituality** whose central axis is **integral ecology** (LS 137-155) as a single paradigm of social justice and environmental justice that complement each other (see LS 49). That is a new paradigm that restores the relationship of justice between human beings, God and creation. In the Bible, the terms "justice" and "injustice" are used primarily to describe relationships between people. But this can be extended to our human relationships with the environment and the cosmos. A just relationship is, above all, a loving, true, compassionate and merciful relationship because God is Love, Truth, Compassion and Mercy (always forgives because he loves without condition). The fruit of this experience is always peace, harmony and creativity. Injustice, on the contrary, is synonymous with imbalance, disharmony and destruction.



“MOUNTAINS HAVE HEIGHTS AND THEY ARE PLENTIFUL, VAST, BEAUTIFUL, GRACEFUL, BRIGHT AND FRAGRANT. THESE MOUNTAINS ARE WHAT MY BELOVED IS TO ME. LONELY VALLEYS ARE QUIET, PLEASANT, COOL, SHADY AND FLOWING WITH FRESH WATER; IN THE VARIETY OF THEIR GROVES AND IN THE SWEET SONG OF THE BIRDS, THEY AFFORD ABUNDANT RECREATION AND DELIGHT TO THE SENSES, AND IN THEIR SOLITUDE AND SILENCE, THEY REFRESH US AND GIVE REST. THESE VALLEYS ARE WHAT MY BELOVED IS TO ME.”

JOHN OF THE CROSS, SPIRITUAL CANTICLE, XIV-XV, 6-8.

29. Faith at the same time gives confidence in the future of humanity. There is hope in intelligence and goodwill as gifts that God has placed in the heart of human beings (LS 68-69), and that they discover when they begin their journey of return to Him. Therefore, even being critical of the ecological crisis due to the (still) current absence of social and environmental justice, the prevailing tone of the encyclical is one of hope for the future. "Let us sing as

we go" - says Francis, at the end of the letter - "May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope" (LS 244).

Jesus, model, mobile and hope.

The Word of God made flesh assumes the goodness of creation and recreates it.

30. Jesus peacefully assumes faith in God, the creator of the Old Testament (cf Mt 11:25), and adds that God is the Father of all creatures and that, in his Providence, He cares for all (Mt 6,25-34; 10.29). The synoptic Gospels emphasize that creation is good, as highlighted in Genesis chapter 1, the psalms and wisdom literature. Jesus insists that evil comes from within human beings, not from things. Things are good (Mk 7:14-20). Although creation contains dimensions of finitude and contingency, the Word of God sheds light on the essentially good value of matter and the rest of creation. In turn, the Gospel of John begins by indicating that, in the being of Jesus Christ, the mystery of **God is introduced into the history, not only of humanity, but of all creation (Jn 1:1-3.14). God is inserted into the created cosmos, suffering its same fate.** This introduction of God in his work not only reaffirms the positive value that God gives to creation, but also it includes his commitment to its destiny.



**THE EXPERIENCE OF EASTER IN THE SPIRIT
ENGENDERS A CHILDLIKE DISPOSITION IN BELIEVERS
AS "CHILDREN OF GOD".**

31. In continuity with this idea that God has gotten involved in the history of the universe, the New Testament expresses that creation has been made anew: there is a "new creation". **The effects of the resurrection of Christ determine a renewed configuration of the cosmos and of all humanity (2 Cor 5:17). The whole of what is created now experiences that newness of being, although awaiting its final deployment (Rom 8:18-22), with the "new heavens and earth" (Ap 21:1).** From faith, the new creation does not consist in a mere restoration of the ecological balance. The recreation of the material universe means again the mediation of the human being, vicar of God for the rest of his work,

in the perfection of Jesus Christ. He, assuming the human and cosmic condition, redesigns and produces creation again through his Passover. This new cosmic reconfiguration is extended in history through the Holy Spirit. **The experience of Easter in the Spirit engenders a childlike disposition in believers as "children of God"**. He makes us "new creatures" and allows us to resume his vicarious task not already determined by the tyrannical forces of sin, which had made us act as oppressors, but animated by the fruits of the Spirit that has made us "a new person" (cf. Eph 4:24, Col 3:10), a "new creature" (cf Gal 6:15) to work towards a new creation.

32. The human being redeemed by the resurrection of Christ, that is, the spiritual human being (Eph 4,24, Col 3,10), is capable through the Holy Spirit of cooperating in the cosmic restoration carried out by Jesus Christ himself (2Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15). This ultimate restoration of creation in "new heaven and new earth" is evoked in the New Testament with the image of childbirth of creation, which implies a transitory state, an unfinished process (Rom 8:13). The new creation takes place in a tension between the definitive that is coming (the new man who is born) and the past that is being left behind (the old man who dies). In this process all creation participates longingly. In some way, as Christian living our faith today, the time of transformation is right for conversion to new realities by humanity and the entire cosmos. In that time, we can see the ecological awakening (and all ecological activity that

accompanies it) as a way of expressing concretely our faith entrusted to the Resurrection.



THE NEW CREATION TAKES PLACE IN A TENSION BETWEEN THE DEFINITIVE THAT IS COMING AND THE PAST THAT IS BEING LEFT BEHIND.

Integral Ecology.

"A true ecological approach always becomes a social approach ... to listen to both the clamor of the earth and the clamor of the poor" (LS 49).

33. Ecological Conversion tends to the integral ecology proposed by Pope Francis in LS. The concept of **integral ecology**, in turn, would seem to connect two levels, one immanent and the other transcendent. On the immanent level it means that the ecological integrity in a particular geographic area and social justice in that **environment** are two faces of the one coin. They are united because human beings and nature are part of interdependent and nourishing systems of life. On the transcendent plane, integral ecology connects the exercise of care for the natural world with the exercise of justice towards the poorest and most disadvantaged people of the earth, who represent God's preferential option, revealed in history; those with whom he identified. For that reason, the exercise of care for creation could become a way of expressing or indeed of cultivating our connection with God. **Thus, integral ecology, what ecological conversion is meant for, indicates that my faith and my eschatological hope in new heaven and new earth (Ap 21:1) may be seen as the same as the present moment in terms of the Gospel: "as often as you did this to my little ones you did it to me" (Mt 25:40), including creatures.**

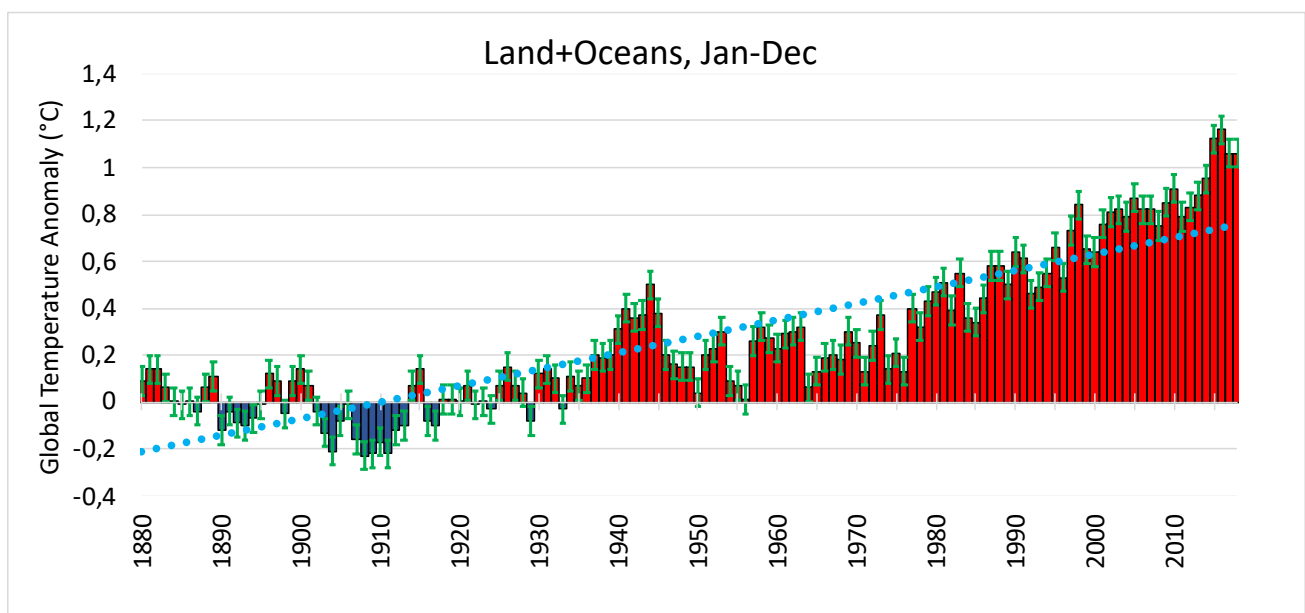


THE EXERCISE OF CARE FOR CREATION COULD BECOME A WAY OF EXPRESSING OR INDEED OF CULTIVATING OUR CONNECTION WITH GOD.

Ecological conversion urges us

34. In the face of the planetary scale of the ecological crisis facing humanity today, **ecological conversion** is crucial for the present generation. Among the principal challenges before us, "climate change", with its "grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods" is one of the principal challenges facing humanity (LS 25). Pope Francis expresses "an urgent need to develop policies so that, in the next years," we can drastically reduce the emission of carbon dioxide and other gases related to climate change, such as "substituting for fossil fuels and developing sources of renewable energy".

Therefore, **ecological conversion today means to be energy efficient, divest in fossil fuels and put all our efforts (money and talent) to increase the current "minimal access to clean and renewable energy" that exists in the world (LS 26)**, such as solar, geothermal, generated by winds and others, as well as the development of suitable storage technologies (batteries) that allow us to store new forms of energy (LS 26).



Change in global average surface temperature, year by year, compared to the pre-industrial period (before 1750), between 1881 and 2018, is a measure of climate change. The last 4 years are the warmest of the period. Source: self made.

35. As the Pope concluded during a conference related to the theme: "we must be even more acutely aware of the importance of accelerating and adapting our actions in responding adequately to

both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor (cf. LS 49) - they are connected"²³. **A sense of urgency, accompanied by right and concrete action, will be the touchstone of our ecological conversion whereby humanity is restored and all creation transformed into God's kingdom of justice and peace (cf. Rom 8:13).**



THE CLIMATE SYSTEM EVERY YEAR IS GIVING STRONGER SIGNALS THAT GLOBAL WARMING IS A CHALLENGE FOR HUMANITY. WE ARE THE LAST GENERATION WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO DO SOMETHING TO REVERSE THE PROCESS.

²³ Cf. Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to Participants at the Conference on "Religions and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Listening to the Cry of the Earth and of the Poor", Clementine Hall, Friday, 8 March 2019.

The Spirit of God renews the earth

Today we are invited to experience the spirituality of ecology as a new Pentecost.

36. The Psalmist says: "You send forth your Spirit, everything is recreated, and you renew the face of the earth" (Ps 10:30). The story the birth of the Church in the Acts of the Apostles (Act 2:4) finds a significant correspondence in this psalm, which gives great praise to God the Creator. The Holy Spirit that Christ has sent from the Father, and the Creator Spirit who has given life to each creature, are one and the same. Our faith in creation tells us that **the "garden" in which we live has been entrusted to us to cultivate and guard with respect. This is possible only if Adam - the old man, formed with earth - allows himself to be re-formed by the Holy Spirit, that is, if he allows himself to be reformed by the Father according to the model of Christ, the new Adam²⁴.**

²⁴ Cf. Holy Mass on The Solemnity of Pentecost, Homily of his Holiness Pope Francis Vatican Basilica, Sunday, 24 May 2015



**COME HOLY SPIRIT, FILL THE HEARTS OF YOUR FAITHFUL.
AND KINDLE IN THEM THE FIRE OF YOUR LOVE.**

**SEND FORTH YOUR SPIRIT
AND THEY SHALL BE CREATED. AND YOU SHALL RENEW THE FACE OF THE
EARTH..**

37. On the morning of Pentecost, the Force of God filled the hearts of the first Christians and they received an energy that pushed them to announce in various languages the event of the Resurrection of Christ: "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues" (Acts 2:4). The flame of love that burned all hardness was the language of the Gospel that crosses all borders that humans make and touches the hearts of the multitude without distinction of language, race or nationality. **The action of the Spirit is and has always been to be our guide to the full truth (Jn 16:13), so that we can bear fruit (Gal 5:22-23) and thus renew the earth (Ps 103).** As in that time, today we are invited to

experience the spirituality of ecology in which the gifts of the Spirit are of inestimable help²⁵.



“AND I SAW A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH: FOR THE FIRST HEAVEN AND THE FIRST EARTH WERE GONE; AND THERE WAS NO MORE SEA.” (AP 21:1).

²⁵ The gifts of the Spirit are: love, joy, peace, patience, affability, kindness, loyalty, modesty, self-control (Gal 5, 22).

Ecological Conversion. In hope of “new heaven and new earth”

Translated by the author from the original in Spanish. Acknowledgment to Gabrielle Fogarty and Denis Quinn for proofreading.

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